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# CHAPTER 1

## RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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By Fredricka L. Stoller

**T**he contemporary concept of individual **rights** is "that all persons, by virtue of their membership in the human species, have certain rights" (Quigley & Bahmueller, 1991, p. 613). *Rights of the Individual* has been selected as the theme for the first chapter of the Civic Education volume because it is pertinent, provocative, and of interest to students worldwide. While exploring aspects of human rights, students can learn the vocabulary and concepts associated with the topic. While improving their language skills, students can develop an understanding of the complexities of individual rights and their role in civil societies. Because the topic is so broad, teachers have the option of using it in a variety of ways: They can create a single, stand-alone lesson on one aspect of the topic; they can design a series of connected lessons that explore the topic in more detail; or they can develop a thematic unit that examines the topic from a variety of perspectives over a longer period of time. The lesson plan ideas presented here are meant to serve as a starting point for teachers interested in introducing this topic to their students.

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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In December 1998, the United Nations marked the 50th anniversary of the world's most comprehensive human rights declaration: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR was approved by the United Nations General Assembly, with no dissenting votes, on December 10, 1948. The thirty articles of the UDHR were expected to serve as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations." The signers of the UDHR emphasized the need for all people and all nations to promote respect for the rights and freedoms specified in the document through education. As a whole, the document was meant to recognize the **inherent dignity** and **equal rights** of all human beings. In essence, the document represented the basic needs, hopes, and wishes of men and women around the world. A review of the thirty articles of the UDHR (a simplified version is included below) reveals a commitment to education, health, work, and culture as well as legal and political rights:

- Article 1: Right to equality
- Article 2: Freedom from discrimination
- Article 3: Right to life, liberty, and safety
- Article 4: Freedom from slavery
- Article 5: Freedom from torture and cruel, **inhumane** punishment
- Article 6: Right to be protected by the law
- Article 7: Right to be treated in the same way as others by the law
- Article 8: Right to legal aid if rights are not respected
- Article 9: No **arbitrary** arrest, prison, or exile
- Article 10: Right to a public and fair trial
- Article 11: Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty
- Article 12: Right to privacy and protection
- Article 13: Right to move within one's country and to leave/return to it when one wishes
- Article 14: Right to protection in another country if one's rights are **violated** in one's own country
- Article 15: Right to be a citizen of one's own country or to become a citizen of another country

Article 16: Right to marriage and family  
Article 17: Right to own property  
Article 18: Freedom of religion  
Article 19: Freedom of opinion and speech; freedom to give and receive information  
Article 20: Right to organize meetings  
Article 21: Right to participate in government and in free elections  
Article 22: Right to personal development by taking part in the economic, social, and cultural life of the country  
Article 23: Right to work for fair pay and to join labor unions. Right for women to receive pay equal to men's pay  
Article 24: Right to paid holidays and reasonable work hours  
Article 25: Right to food, housing, and medical care  
Article 26: Right to an education  
Article 27: Right to participate in the cultural life of one's community  
Article 28: Right to a social and international order that protects all these rights  
Article 29: Community duties are necessary for free and full development of people  
Article 30: Right to all these freedoms without interference by government or individuals

The thirty articles of the UDHR were written and agreed upon by representatives of many different nations, nations with different political systems and different populations. The United Nations was not the first organization to promote respect for human rights. In 1791, for example, the Constitution of the United States of America was amended to include a Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights, in actuality the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, was created to protect the basic rights of U.S. citizens. As an example, the first amendment protects individuals from governmental interference by means of freedom of speech, **press**, **assembly**, and religion. Amendments five to eight define and protect specific rights of individuals accused of crimes or involved in **disputes** under law; more specifically, the sixth and seventh amendments guarantee an individual's right to a lawyer and a trial by **jury**.

Since the passage of the Bill of Rights in the late 1700s, an additional 17 amendments have been added to the U.S. Constitution. For example, slavery was outlawed in 1865 with the 13th amendment; women were granted the right to vote in 1920 with the 19th amendment; and in 1971, the minimum voting age in the U.S. became 18 with the passage of the 26th amendment.

Other nations have passed similar declarations to recognize and protect individual rights. Sadly, many people around the world find themselves living in environments without the rights set forth in the UDHR some fifty years ago.

## CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

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One way to keep the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights alive and to promote their importance is to integrate them into education. Language teachers can create many different content-based lessons around the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Bill of Rights, and the concepts underlying these declarations. One possible 50-minute lesson is described here.

### Preliminary Lesson Planning

**Materials:** Create two sets of handouts, with four different versions of each. Each handout in the first set should include five provocative statements, each one related in some way to at least one of the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The goal is to include statements that are likely to stimulate meaningful and extended discussion among students. The four sample handouts in Appendix B ([Handout #1, versions A, B, C, D](#)) could easily be adapted for different student populations by (a) changing the emphasis of the statements in response to student interests and/or issues of current relevance in one's country and (b) adjusting the language used (so that the statements are more or less complex) in response to students' language proficiency and language needs. (The UDHR articles tied to each statement in these sample handouts are listed in [Appendix D](#)).

The second set of handouts ([Handout #2, versions A, B, C, D, in Appendix C](#)) requires students to match UDHR articles with statements made on Handout #1. These handouts, like the first set, can be adapted for different student populations. For more advanced students, teachers might want to include the original UDHR articles; for less proficient students, even more simplified versions could be included.

**Student grouping decisions:** Decide on procedures for grouping students for Activities #1 and #2. If appropriate, make up tentative lists of group members for each activity. It is recommended that groups have no more than six participants each. Make last minute adjustments when it is determined which students are actually in class.

**Vocabulary considerations:** Consider the vocabulary that students need to know to complete the lesson successfully. Determine which vocabulary items the students already know and which items they'll need to be introduced to. Some important terms, and their definitions, are included in a glossary in [Appendix A](#).

### Warm-Up Activity (approximately 5 minutes)

#### *Purpose:*

- To stimulate student interest in the topic of individual rights
- To tap students' background knowledge
- To introduce vocabulary that will facilitate successful completion of the lesson

#### *Procedures:*

- Write "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" on the blackboard.
- Ask students what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is. Put key words from students' responses on the blackboard. If students are unfamiliar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, be prepared to provide students with relevant background information, adding words to the blackboard as you introduce key ideas.

- Underline the word "Rights" on the blackboard. Ask students what "rights" might be included in the declaration. Add key words and concepts to the blackboard.

(Do not erase the blackboard. Come back to it at the end of the lesson as a way to provide meaningful closure to the lesson.)

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### Transition from Warm Up to Activity #1

Tell students that the class session will be devoted to exploring aspects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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### Activity #1 (approximately 25 minutes)

Purpose:

- To provide students with opportunities to use English in a meaningful way
- To introduce students to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in relation to real-world situations
- To give students the chance to use key vocabulary and concepts associated with the theme of the lesson

Procedure:

1. Divide students into four groups (A, B, C, D) in the quickest way possible. The number of groups that you actually have will depend largely on the size of your class. For example, with a small class, all students in group A can sit together. With a large class, you can create multiple A groups, multiple B groups, multiple C groups, and multiple D groups. Distribute [Handout #1](#); give appropriate version of the handout (A, B, C, or D) to each group.
2. Working alone, students should read each statement on their handout and indicate with a check (✓) whether they strongly agree (SA), agree (A), are uncertain (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) with the statement. If students have never engaged in an exercise like this, put an example sentence on the blackboard to model the process in front of the entire class. Ask students to be ready to explain the reason for their responses to classmates. While students are working individually, circulate among them to make sure they understand all important vocabulary and the task at hand.
3. Ask students to be ready to explain the reason for their responses to classmates. While students are working individually, circulate among them to make sure they understand all important vocabulary and the task at hand.
4. Ask students to discuss their responses with members of their group (A, B, C, or D). Ask students to do the following (if necessary, write instructions on the blackboard):
  - a. Compare your responses with group members.
  - b. Explain your reason for each response.
  - c. Ask group members questions if you do not understand their reasons.

5. While students are working in groups, circulate around the classroom. Make sure students stay on task. Answer questions and/or provide clarification when needed.
6. Distribute [Handout #2](#); give appropriate version (A, B, C, or D) to each group. Ask students to do the following:
  - a. Match each situation on Handout #1 to the appropriate Universal Declaration of Human Rights article(s).
7. While students are working together, circulate and provide them with feedback on their responses, referring to the Answer Key (in [Appendix D](#)) for reference. Point out key words which might help them with the matching exercise.
8. Ask groups to identify the situation and UDHR article which caused the most discussion (or controversy, debate, interest) among them. Tell students to be prepared to explain group selection (and reasons for the selection) to other students in class.

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### **Activity #2 (approximately 15 minutes)**

#### **Purpose:**

- To provide students with opportunities to use English in a meaningful way
- To reinforce key vocabulary and concepts associated with the theme of the lesson
- To give students the opportunity to be successful in English by asking them to report information discussed earlier with other classmates

#### **Procedures:**

1. Create new student groups--ideally with at least one representative from original groups A, B, C, and D--in the fastest way possible.
2. Ask students to do the following in their new groups:
  - a. Identify the situation and Universal Declaration of Human Rights article which caused the most discussion (controversy, debate, interest) in original group.
  - b. Explain diverse opinions of classmates.
  - c. Answer questions from new group members.

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### **Cool Down Activity (approximately 5 minutes)**

#### **Purpose:**

- To provide some closure to lesson
- To give students an opportunity to discuss relevance of lesson

#### **Procedures:**

Look back at blackboard. Ask students the following questions:

What words can we add to the blackboard to create a more complete picture of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Add students' responses to the blackboard.

Which concepts are most controversial? (Circle students' responses.)

Which concepts are most interesting? (Box students' responses.)

Which concepts are most important? (Put a star next to students' responses.)

Why are they important?

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### **Possible Extensions for this lesson**

Ask students any of these questions to extend the lesson.

- a. Which UDHR articles do you find most interesting? Most important? Least important? Why?
- b. Are universal standards, such as those listed in the UDHR, possible in today's world? Why? Why not?
- c. Do you think the United Nations should enforce the UDHR? Why? Why not?
- d. What would society be like if everyone followed the UDHR?
- e. Why do you think so many nations have not been able to live up to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Remind students that the UDHR was written in 1948, in response to the events of World War II and the global depression of the 1930s. Ask students to consider these two questions: Which UDHR articles, if any, are no longer needed today? What new articles need to be added to the Declaration to respond to today's life and world situation?

Ask groups of students to select one article of the UDHR that they feel is important. Give groups time to plan a presentation about the UDHR article that they've selected, in the form of a poster, skit, song, poem, or essay. While students make their presentations, their classmates should be asked to guess which UDHR article the group is highlighting.

Ask students to work in groups to draft a "Declaration of Individual Rights for the 21st Century." Students should be prepared to defend and provide a rationale for their choices. Have students compare their drafts and generate a final "Class Declaration of Individual Rights."

[Background](#)

[Classroom Applications](#)

## Appendix B

### Handout #1 for students in group A

Read each statement. Indicate with a check ( ✓ ) whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), are uncertain (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) with the statement.	<b>SA A U D SD</b>
A1. Men and women who have the same job responsibilities should earn the same pay.	_____
A2. Magazines that advertise harmful products, like cigarettes and alcohol, should not be sold.	_____
A3. People should be able to practice any religion they want.	_____
A4. People should be able to marry whomever they'd like, regardless of nationality, religion, race.	_____
A5. Everyone who works deserves a paid holiday.	_____

### Handout #1 for students in group B

Read each statement. Indicate with a check ( ✓ ) whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), are uncertain (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) with the statement.	<b>SA A U D SD</b>
B1. A newspaper should be able to print whatever information it wants.	_____
B2. A killer who has tortured his victim should be tortured as punishment.	_____
B3. A person who has a police record of disrupting public events should be put in jail before future events to protect people.	_____
B4. People should not have to work without wages and without rights.	_____
B5. All people--young and old, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, powerful and powerless--should be treated equally under the law.	_____

**Handout #1 for students in group C.**

Read each statement. Indicate with a check ( ✓ ) whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), are uncertain (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) with the statement.	SA A U D SD
C1. Everyone should be able to own a small piece of land.	_____
C2. School textbooks that focus on the weaknesses of minority ethnic groups and minority religious groups should not be allowed in schools.	_____
C3. People who want to move from one part of a country to another region of the same country (for example, from the countryside to the city) should be able to.	_____
C4. All trials should be open to the public.	_____
C5. Police should be able to enter any home, apartment, school, or business if they think that a search is necessary.	_____

**Handout #1 for students in group D.**

Read each statement. Indicate with a check ( ✓ ) whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), are uncertain (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) with the statement.	SA A U D SD
D1. All children--rich and poor, urban and rural, well and ill--deserve a good education.	_____
D2. All adults should be able to vote the way they wish.	_____
D3. Workers should be able to decide if they want to join unions or not. No one should be forced to join a union.	_____
D4. During times of war and economic troubles, citizens should not criticize government policies.	_____
D5. Poor people from the countryside should be given the opportunity to sell products on the street to earn a living.	_____

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## Appendix C

### Handout #2 for students in group A.

Read the following Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) articles. Match the appropriate UDHR article to appropriate statement on Handout #1 (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5). Write the UDHR article number to the left of each statement on Handout #1.

UDHR article 16: Right to marriage and family

UDHR article 18: Freedom of religion

UDHR article 23: Right to work for fair pay and to join labor unions. Right for women to receive pay equal to men's pay

UDHR article 19: Freedom of opinion and speech; freedom to give and receive information

UDHR article 24: Right to paid holidays and reasonable work hours

### Handout #2 for students in group B.

Read the following Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) articles. Match the appropriate UDHR article to appropriate statement on Handout #1 (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5). Write the UDHR article number to the left of each statement on Handout #1.

UDHR article 11: Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty

UDHR article 5: Freedom from torture and cruel, inhumane, or degrading punishment

UDHR articles 1 & 7: Right to equality; Right to be treated in the same way as others by the law

UDHR article 4: Freedom from slavery

UDHR article 19: Freedom of opinion and speech; freedom to give and receive information

### Handout #2 for students in group C

Read the following Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) articles. Match the appropriate UDHR article to appropriate statement on Handout #1 (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5). Write the UDHR article number to the left of each statement on Handout #1.

UDHR article 17: Right to own property

UDHR article 26: Right to an education

UDHR article 13: Right to move within one's country and to leave/return to it when one wishes

UDHR article 10: Right to a public and fair trial

UDHR article 12: Right to privacy and protection

### Handout #2 for students in group D.

Read the following Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) articles. Match the appropriate UDHR article to appropriate statement on Handout #1 (D1, D2, D3, D4, D5). Write the UDHR article number to the left of each statement on Handout #1.

UDHR article 26: Right to an education

UDHR article 21: Right to participate in government and in free elections

UDHR articles 20 & 23: Right to organize meetings; Right to work for fair pay and to join labor unions. Right for women to receive pay equal to men's pay

UDHR article 19: Freedom of opinion and speech; freedom to give and receive information

UDHR article 22: Right to personal development by taking part in the economic, social, and cultural life of the country

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## Appendix D

Answer key: Article(s) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) associated with each Handout #1 statement			
A1. Related to UDHR article 23	B1. Related to UDHR article 19	C1. Related to UDHR article 17	D1. Related to UDHR article 26
A2. Related to UDHR article 19	B2. Related to UDHR article 5	C2. Related to UDHR article 26	D2. Related to UDHR article 21
A3. Related to UDHR article 18	B3. Related to UDHR article 11	C3. Related to UDHR article 13	D3. Related to UDHR articles 20 and 23
A4. Related to UDHR article 16	B4. Related to UDHR article 4	C4. Related to UDHR article 10	D4. Related to UDHR article 19
A5. Related to UDHR article 24	B5. Related to UDHR articles 1 and 7	C5. Related to UDHR article 12	D5. Related to UDHR article 22

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